

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2256

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

S E C R E T ASUNCION 1256

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, PA, CI, PE

SUBJECT: NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE OF POTENTIAL FOR
CONFLICT BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU

REF: STATE 56480

1. THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE, INTER ALIA, IN ANSWER TO THE
QUESTIONS LISTED IN PARAS 2(C)&(D) OF REFTTEL, AND ARE KEYED TO
CORRESPOND TO PARA 5 OF REFTTEL.

2. (A) WITH NO SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL INTERESTS INVOLVING EITHER
CHILE OR PERU, PARAGUAY MAINTAINS LARGELY ROUTINE,
SYMBOLIC DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ALONG WITH THE USUAL OAS
AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION LOG-ROLLING, ETC. RELATIONS
WITH PERU ARE CORRECT AND FRIENDLY. THOSE WITH CHILE ARE
SIGNIFICANTLY CLOSER. THE GOP WAS VISCERALLY HOSTILE TO THE
ALLENDE REGIME AND HIS DOWNFALL WAS GREETED WITH NEAR-EUPHORIA.
THE PRESENT CHILEAN GOVERNMENT WHICH IS NOT ONLY CONSERVATIVE BUT
MILITARY, IS REGARDED BY PARAGUAYAN LEADERSHIP WITH AN ALMOST
EMOTIONAL FERVOR. OTHER FACTORS WHICH ACCOUNT FOR PARAGUAY'S

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BIAS TOWARD CHILE IS THAT BOTH SAHE A COMMON FORMER ENEMY,

BOLIVIA, AND BOTH HAVE EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS WITH THEIR COMMON NEIGHBOR, ARGENTINA.

3.(B) PERU'S ACQUISITION OF SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT HAS HAD A PREDICTABLE ADVERSE EFFECT ON ATTITUDES IN THIS RITUALISTICALLY ANTI-COMMUNIST COUNTRY. CONCERNED COMMENTS REGARDING CHILE'S PLIGHT WITH "THE SOVIET UNION ON ITS BORDERS" HAVE BEEN HEARD IN BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CIRCLES. WHILE FEARFUL OF, AND HOSTILE TO THE INCREASE OF SOVIET PRESENCE IN ANY FORM IN LATIN AMERICA, A POWERLESS AND CAUTIOUS GOP WILL KEEP ITS DISCOMFITURE TO ITSELF. WE KNOW FROM THE GOP'S KNOWLEDGE OF US MILITARY AID TO BOLIVIA THAT THE GOP KEEPS ITSELF INFORMED THROUGH ITS EMBASSIES AND CAREFUL READING OF THE PRESS CONCERNING MILITARY AFFAIRS IN SOUTH AMERICA. THUS IT PROBABLY HAS NOT ESCAPED THE GOP' ATTENTION THAT THE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT (ACCORDING TO PRESS PREPMENTS) HAS NOTED THAT ONE FACTOR IN DECIDING TO PURCHASE SOVIET TANKS WAS RELUCTANCE BY THE USG TO PROVIDE SUCH WEAPONS.

4.(C) WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE GOP WITH LIMITED INTERESTS, AND EVEN MORE LIMITED RESOURCES AND INFLUENCE, WILL AT BEST PLAY A SECONDARY ROLE IN ANY SUCH SITUATION AS CHILEAN-PERUVIAN RIVALRY. THEREFORE WE DO NOT SEE THE GOP SERIOUSLY STUDYING "NEW CONSIDERATIONS" WITH A VIEW TO FORMULATING POLICY; THE SITUATION IS SIMPLY BEYOND THE GOP'S HORIZON.

5. (D)(1) WHILE IDEOLOGICALLY SYMPATHETIC TO CHILE, THE GOP'S POSITION WOULD BE DERIVED FROM THOSE OF THE THREE COUNTRIES WHICH ARE CONSTANT FACTORS IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY CALCULATIONS: THE US, BRAZIL, AND ARGENTINA. WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THE GOP HOLDING BACK, TO SEE HOW THOSE GOVERNMENTS WOULD REACT; WE ALSO WOULD ANTICIPATE THE GOP BEING INCLINED TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE US IF IT DID NOT CONFLICT TOO MUCH WITH OBJECTIVES OF BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA. FINALLY WE ASSUME THAT THE GOP, SMALL, RELATIVELY UNARMED, AND PARANOID CONCERNING EITHER INSURGENT ASSAULT FROM ARGENTINE SAFEHAVENS OR BOLIVIAN "REVANCHISM", WOULD FULLY SUPPORT RAPID INVOLVEMENT OF THE OAS IN ANY CHILEAN-PERUVIAN CONFRONTATION OR OUTRIGHT HOSTILITIES.

(2) WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT THE GOP WOULD TAKE ANY OF THESE ACTIONS, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF LIMITED DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY ASSUMING THAT THE OAS WERE TO BE INVOLVED IN SETTLING

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THE CRISIS.

(3) GIVEN THE MYRIAD OF POSSIBLE SCENARIOS UNDER WHICH A CRISIS COULD UNFOLD, WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO "GUESS" THE "IMPACT". FACTORS WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED INCLUDE: WHO IS SEEN AS AGGRESSOR OR DISTURBER OF THE STATUS QUO; SEVERITY OF CRISIS OR ACTUAL HOSTILITIES; AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM'S INVOLVEMENT, EITHER FORMALLY OR OTHERWISE.

(4) A CHILE-PERU ARMS RACE OR CRISIS WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON GOP
ARMS PROCUREMENT DUE TO FINANCIAL RESTRICTIONS AND PARAGUAY'S
OFT-STATED POLICY OF ACQUIRING MILITARY EQUIPMENT ALMOST
EXCLUSIVELY ON A GRANT BASIS FROM THE UNITED STATES, BRAZIL,
AND ARGENTINA.
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